

2005 Eckhart Tolle video The Simple Truth interview with Danish Journalist Anne Hjord

[Speaker 2] (0:00 - 0:20)

Yes, I'm going to start with, I'm aware that you are not, that you don't find personal history important, but still I would like to ask you some questions about your life and your background. So how did you grow up, where did you grow up and in what kind of family?

[Speaker 1] (0:21 - 3:19)

I grew up in northwest Germany up to the age of 13. My father was a journalist, my mother a housewife. Then my parents got divorced when I was 12 and my father dropped out of conventional life and society.

You see, he was an early dropout before the term dropout even existed and he went to live in Spain. So my parents got divorced, my father left to live in Spain and I was very unhappy at school so at 13 I refused to go to school any longer. That was my only act of rebellion as a child.

I was on the whole a very meek, obedient child, but something within me prevented me from going to school. I just couldn't do it anymore, so I stopped. My mother didn't know what to do with me, so finally it was decided that I should join my father in Spain, who had remarried, and lived a very unconventional life.

He lived on his savings for a few years and then he started working there. So I spent my teenage years from 13 to 19 in Spain, so the Spanish language became my second language. I was taken out of the culture that had surrounded me for the first 13 years of my life and then placed in a completely different environment and culture.

And that probably was a good thing because if one spends one's whole life in one particular cultural environment, one tends to become conditioned by that particular culture without knowing it. So by experiencing different cultures as a child that somehow perhaps made the cultural conditioning less deep, less rigid. And my father was always a very unconventional person.

Some people would call him eccentric. So when I got to Spain, he asked me, do you want to go to school here? And of course I said no.

And so he said, okay, then don't go to school and do what you like. And that's what I was able to do. I was reading certain books that I liked to read, studying, I began reading some literature.

I went to language classes in the evenings and afternoons and studied some other

subjects that I was interested in like astronomy and so on. So I grew up without, especially in my teenage years, without the pressure that most youngsters experience. And then at 19, I went on my own to live in England.

[Speaker 2] (3:21 - 3:23)

And then you started to have an education in England?

[Speaker 1] (3:24 - 18:50)

Yes, in England I was offered a job, although I didn't have any formal qualifications. Miraculously, somebody offered me a job and I was actually teaching German and Spanish for a few years at a language school. And then a kind of quest started.

And what also started at that point was already the beginnings of depression that I would experience periodically and living in a state of increasing anxiety, a kind of generalized anxiety. And I was looking for some answer to the dilemma of life and living, and I was looking to philosophy and the intellect for an answer. So I began to read a lot and then I thought the answers would probably be found at the universities, the professors would know.

So I took the exams that I needed in evening classes to get to university and then I went on to London University where I did languages and literature. And increasingly became more and more unhappy and continued to search and absorb more and more knowledge and gradually beginning to realize that they didn't really have the answers to life's dilemma. I remember there was one professor at London University that I liked very much and I would go to his classes and admired him, very knowledgeable.

And one day we arrived on a Monday morning and we were told that he had just committed suicide. And that shook me inside and I realized that certainly these people that I looked to for an answer didn't have it either. And so my depression intensified and I did very well in the degree examinations because I studied so hard out of fear really.

I was driven by anxiety. And then after graduating from London University, I didn't do anything for about a year and that was the year in which I became even more unhappy and depressed and when an inner shift suddenly happened inside me. It was in my 29th year, I woke up in the middle of the night and this was not uncommon for me, waking up in the middle of the night and feeling intensely depressed and in a state of great fear at the same time.

And that happened again that night and the thought occurred to me, I can't live with myself any longer. And that thought repeated itself in my mind, I just can't live with myself. And then suddenly I looked at the thought, I kind of stood back from that thought and looked at it and said, that's a strange thought, I cannot live with myself.

Am I one or am I two? This thought seems to show that there's two people here, I and the self that I cannot live with. I didn't have an answer to that question, it's just that question, that puzzle arose in my mind.

And much later it reminded me of koans that they have in Zen that are puzzles that are designed to stop the mind. For example, what is the sound of one hand clapping is a famous koan and it doesn't have an answer on an intellectual level and so the question that arose in my mind also didn't have an answer on an intellectual level, who am I and who is myself that I cannot live with? But that question triggered an inner shift, something inside me that I didn't understand it at that point must have disidentified from the self, the unhappy me as I later called it.

So a kind of an inner disidentification happened, the I am, which I later recognized as the consciousness that I am, separated itself from the conditioned entity, the conditioned consciousness that provided me with my sense of identity, the self. And that consisted largely of an unhappy story. So then I felt I was like being drawn into some kind of vortex of energy as if I were disappearing in that and there was still a moment of resistance and I heard something almost like a voice inside me that said, resist nothing.

So I gave up resisting the feeling of, almost the feeling of disappearing into nothingness. And so that, don't remember very much else of that night. All I know that the next morning I woke up and I opened my eyes and I looked around the room and everything seemed as if I was seeing it for the first time, fresh, new, alive.

The light coming through the windows, familiar objects on the table, they looked fresh, new and alive. So I got up and went out for a walk and I looked around and everything seemed so peaceful. Even the traffic in the city seemed so peaceful and I knew something strange had happened.

There was suddenly, everything was filled with aliveness and peace and I didn't know why. And so, and that went on and then this inner peace as the background to all experiences and the background to all sense perceptions, even as the background to my thinking, that then never really left me again. But it took me a long time to understand it, to be able to put it into words.

And so a little later I started investigating other spiritual teachings, for the first time Buddhism, Christianity and more contemporary spiritual teachings. And very quickly I recognized the truth that is in many cases hiding underneath sometimes centuries of cultural additions, interpretations and misinterpretations. And I could see the truth that's in Buddhism, that's in Christianity, the original teachings.

And in turn, they shed light on what had happened to me. For example, I picked up the New Testament and I read Jesus' words, the peace that passes all understanding. I said, that's exactly what I feel.

I have this peace and I don't understand what it is. So he must have had the same experience. Peace suddenly arose which was not causally related to anything in the external world.

It wasn't caused by something wonderful happening in my external environment. So it didn't seem to have a cause, an external cause. And then later I visited Zen teachers and so on.

And again, I recognized the truth of Zen immediately. But they also helped me to understand and put what had happened to me into a wider context. For example, I remember talking to one Buddhist monk who said, who talked about coming to the end of always having to think, thinking.

And he said, Zen is about not thinking ultimately. And I immediately realized something that I actually, strangely, I hadn't realized before, that my thought processes, ever since that happened that night, had become reduced by maybe 80%. So I wasn't actually thinking that much anymore.

And that's why there was so much peace. So I realized the continuous mental noise, as I now call it, which is the compulsive and largely useless thinking that most people are continuously engaged in, that had come to an end. There would still be some thought, and I could use thinking when I needed it, and occasionally thoughts would come in and out.

But there were huge stretches of no thought. And in those long gaps and intervals of no thought, there was that wonderful experience of inner peace. And I realized that inner peace had been there before, even when I was still anxious.

But it had simply been covered up by the anxiety, by the hyperactive mind. And so this then gradually developed into a spiritual teaching. So the spiritual teaching now attempts to show people that they have within themselves already what they perhaps are looking for on the outside.

The aliveness, the peace, the sense of deep inner fulfillment is already present in every human being as their innermost essence. So it's not a question of needing to obtain or acquire something new, which is often what spiritual seekers are looking for. Everybody is looking to acquire something to fulfill him or herself.

They may be looking for it on a material level, or on the level of experiences, or on the level of accumulating knowledge, or accumulating wealth. Or spiritual seekers want to add more spiritual experiences to who they are, or find themselves at some point in the future. And you can't, because if you're looking to the future to find yourself, you're missing yourself already, the essence of your being, which you can only find in the now.

So my realization that night took me years to understand, and in the process of

understanding it, at the same time people would already come to me occasionally and ask questions. So gradually I was able to talk about it, and I was able to recognize in others what I had been through. It's the same dilemma, perhaps with the exception that I was suffering from it more acutely than many others, that's all.

I was even more deeply immersed in the mental noise and the emotional turmoil than would be normal. But the same mechanism operates in everyone. So the teaching now is to point out that there is a dimension in you that is deeper than what you normally identify with as yourself, that is deeper than the me, the personal history that most people believe is who they are.

And so the recognition of that dimension comes when you make room inside yourself for the present moment, because it can only come out of an inner alignment with now, as I call it, which is life itself. The stream of thinking is always concerned with past and future. So for most people who are identified with thinking all the time, every thought is invested with a sense of self and me.

Every thought grips you completely and you are in it. This is what identified means. Every thought that arises becomes a me, and you think it and you're in it.

And so most people are dragged along all day long by this mind stream, one thought after another. And within that mind stream there is a mind-made sense of self, a me, consisting of past memories and experiences and things that my mind has identified with and that contribute to my identity. They are all thought forms.

For example, my possessions, my knowledge, my experiences, or what people have done to me, what I have done to people, or things that whatever you identify with and then hang on to in your mind becomes a me. And that was really the self that that night I recognized as not really me. So there is the mind stream, there is identification with the mind stream, and there is the possibility of stepping out of the mind stream by accessing the present moment.

Now to most people the present moment almost doesn't exist, because what they are really interested in is the next moment or the one after that. So they live always towards the future. They live towards the next moment.

And unconsciously they regard the next moment, the next point in the future that they need to get to, unconsciously they regard that as more important than this moment. Not realizing that the future moment that they so desperately want to get to, tonight, tomorrow, whatever, or in any activity, needing, wanting to get it out of the way as quickly as possible, needing to get to the end point, on a small scale, on a large scale.

[Speaker 2] (18:52 - 18:53)

Yes, yes.

[Speaker 1] (18:55 - 24:33)

And so they don't recognize that the future has no existence except as a thought form. So when you always live towards the future, you live your life trapped in the conceptual reality of thought forms, which assumes a greater significance for you than the immediate reality of life, which is always now, because your life consists entirely of the present moment. And to most people that's, if you truly realize the significance of that statement, your entire life consists of the present moment.

Your life is never not this moment. Even when you remember the past, you can only remember it now. And when you think about the future, you can only think about it now.

But people live as if the present moment were an obstacle that they need to overcome in order to get to some better point, which never arrives. So that's a mad way to live. And it makes living hard.

It makes living into an effort. We've been conditioned over thousands of years, the human mind, which was a wonderful thing, the ability to think at some point, a long, long time ago, must have arisen in humans. The ability to conceptualize mentally.

And this has opened up a whole new dimension for humanity. And of course, it has made humanity the most powerful species on the planet because humans are not physically the strongest species, but they were able to dominate all the other species because of their ability to think. And so that developed slowly.

Probably in a mythological form, it's expressed in the story of Genesis at the beginning of the Bible, when they eat this apple that comes from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad to differentiate this, that. That comes only through the ability to think, to analyze, to separate. And so that gradually developed in humans.

And at first, it wasn't a problem. It opened up new possibilities. Then over thousands and thousands of years, the thinking mind became stronger.

It grew and grew. And gradually, they lost connectedness with something that is deeper and more essential within themselves. We could call that being, the sense of aliveness, a deeper intelligence, even, that is more than just the thoughts that go on in your head.

So gradually, humans, because of the growth of the thinking mind, lost their ability to sense their deeper connectedness with life. And now we have arrived at a point where our whole sense of who we are is caught up in the mind and in thought. So we have been through an evolutionary stage, which was a necessary one for humanity, and we could call that the stage of mind, the stage of thought.

And to such a point now that we are completely possessed, I use that word, we are possessed by the mind without knowing it. We cannot stop thinking, it seems. We can,

but for most people, that's not yet a reality.

They have to think, the compulsion to think, and to derive your sense of self from the movement of thought. We are arriving at the end of this whole evolutionary stage, and for humanity now to go on, it needs to transcend the mind, no longer be possessed by the mind, to go beyond the compulsion to think into a deeper level of being. So it's almost like regaining what they have lost.

But when you regain something that you lost, you regain it with a deeper awareness. And this is the process that we are involved in now, that humanity is involved in now, because an evolutionary transformation, a transformation of consciousness, really is no longer a luxury, so to speak, is no longer optional for humanity. For the first time in the history of humanity, a transformation of consciousness is a necessity if humanity is to survive, because we are creating havoc on the planet.

We are creating hell, to a large extent, on a planet that potentially is paradise.

[Speaker 2] (24:35 - 24:47)

Is that why you... I mean, you could have chosen just to stay on your own, and being on your own, but you chose to be a teacher and to go out and teach. Why is that?

[Speaker 1] (24:48 - 26:48)

Yes. Being a teacher was the response to a demand that came to me. So it was not so much...

It wasn't a conscious choice that, oh, I want to teach or I need to teach. It simply arose out of, first of all, individual people coming to me and asking questions or wanting some kind of help or becoming drawn, becoming interested in what I had to say and experiencing an inner shift after coming a few times. And so being a teacher that developed organically without me ever deciding I want to be a teacher.

And so from seeing individuals, it gradually developed into occasionally meeting in small groups, and that went on for a few years. And out of all these meetings with individual people and small groups, I took notes after meeting with people often because things that I said in those individual sessions or group meetings were things that were new to me also. They came out of that moment.

They came out as a response to a person's question. So I would often take notes, and I had a collection of notes after a few years. And some of those notes later became incorporated into *The Power of Now*, the book.

And so *The Power of Now* is in part the result of my work with people over a number of years, and in part the arising of also a new teaching in the process of writing it.

[Speaker 2] (26:50 - 27:00)

I read in an interview you gave that for a lot of years you were only absorbed in being and you were not doing anything.

[Speaker 1] (27:00 - 27:01)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (27:01 - 27:05)

And it was a kind of unbalance in your life.

[Speaker 1] (27:05 - 27:05)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (27:05 - 27:07)

Could you describe that?

[Speaker 1] (27:07 - 30:04)

Yes. Well, after the transformation happened that night, my external life for a few more years went on as if nothing much had changed on the external level. I went on to do graduate work.

However, my heart was never fully in it anymore, in intellectual pursuits, in analytical work. But my external life had a certain momentum, so it went on for a few more years, and then that momentum came to an end. And a point arrived when I was at Cambridge doing graduate work and some teaching, and suddenly I realized this has come to an end, and I simply walked away from it all.

And after that, two years followed in which I did very little, and I didn't have a home of my own. I would drift from here to there, spend most days just sitting. When it was warm enough, I would sit outside on park benches or walk around.

I was then in London at that time. And I was so deeply immersed in the peace, almost the bliss of the simple experience of being, the simple feeling, the goodness of life every moment, that I lost interest in future completely. There were no ambitions, and I wasn't even interested in doing anything.

So from an external viewpoint, one could say my life for a while became unbalanced. I became so deeply immersed in being that I lost interest in doing. One could almost say I lost the ability for a while to be active in the world.

And then gradually, the ability to be active in the world came back. So a balance after a

while reestablished itself. So I'm now able to be active in the world and at the same time be rooted in being.

One does not exclude the other. But for some reason, I had to go very deeply within for a while, perhaps even on a larger scale. It may be that some people for a while have to go very deeply into being simply to provide a balance on the level of the collective consciousness because most human beings are totally lost in doing.

So it may require a few humans who go very deeply into being to provide a balance. Although on a personal level, it might look as if they were unbalanced.

[Speaker 2] (30:06 - 30:14)

Are you always in presence now? Don't you get relapses? Don't you ever get angry or frustrated?

[Speaker 1] (30:16 - 31:48)

No. I live in a surrender to the present moment. And so that is always there.

Whatever happens right now, I recognize that it is futile to argue with whatever is happening at this moment. So emotions occasionally still come. If I see human suffering, I sometimes weep.

I can cry. And yet even then, there's a deep sense of peace in the background even though I may cry externally if I see especially humans inflicting so much suffering on other human beings and on animals and on nature, on the planet. So sometimes tears come.

And yet deep down I know that ultimately life is timeless and indestructible. And I know that death is not the opposite of life but only the opposite of birth. Life is beyond the forms of life.

Life is timeless and immortal. It's that which underlies the entire manifested world. And that dimension is present in each human being.

[Speaker 2] (31:52 - 31:55)

So what is your life like today? Do you have a family?

[Speaker 1] (31:56 - 36:41)

No. My life is now very different from what it was before, especially before the book came out. I was already teaching before the book came out.

But soon after the book came out, the book grew very quickly. At first through word of mouth for one year. And then other people discovered it and started writing about it and

speaking about it.

And then it accelerated. So soon after the book came out, the teaching developed a momentum that was almost overwhelming. And it turned my external life around completely from living a very sheltered life, a very quiet life, almost a hermit-like life.

Suddenly everybody wanted me to teach and demands for this and that were coming in, invitations flooding in from all over the world and so on. And then I responded at the beginning to almost every invitation. And then I realized it's impossible.

I can no longer respond to every invitation. So nevertheless, my life is now almost public. And the groups become bigger and bigger.

In the United States, the average number for talks is 2,000 people now. And so I'm very much out there in the world. And this is not something that naturally I would have chosen for myself.

My natural inclination would be to be withdrawn, not to be known. I like to be invisible in public places, not to be noticed. And that becomes more difficult now.

And yet I accept the fact that this is how it is. So there's a lot of traveling. And there's been so much in the past few years that now I feel I need to cut back for a while.

And I believe, my feeling is, that the cycle of going out into the world, which has lasted now for six years, may be coming to an end, and there may be coming a cycle of withdrawal for a little while, in which another book may come into being. And so I've had to surrender to the fact that my external life changed completely. It's been wonderful, too, to see how many people are being reached by the teaching, the book, and the talks and the retreats, how many people are open to the message.

And that was the greatest surprise after the book came out, because when I was writing the book, the book wrote itself, one can almost say, my feeling was that only people who had already been on the spiritual path for a long time would respond to the book. And that was not the case. People responded to the book, both people who had been on the path for many years, they responded, but also people who had never read a spiritual book in their lives, who had never had access to that dimension.

They suddenly wrote to me and said, my life has changed. This is incredible. I've read this book several times already, and it's fresh and new every time, and there's so much peace in my life suddenly.

So the book seems to have reached all kinds of people, no matter what their background is. Also education doesn't seem to matter very much. Some highly educated people are open to it, and others who are not are equally open, because it's not difficult to understand on an intellectual level.

And yet, not everybody is open to the books. There are some people, there are people who wrote to me and said, I bought a copy for a close friend, and he found it completely meaningless. He read two or three pages and said, it doesn't make sense to me, and so they put the book on the shelf.

And it may well be that in 10 or 20 years' time, they take the book down from the shelf again, and suddenly there's an inner readiness. So many people are open, but certainly not everybody.

[Speaker 2] (36:42 - 36:58)

I have some more questions about this new situation of yours. I mean, you have become a success, and your books have sold in millions of copies all over the world, and you have become famous, and you're making a lot of money. How do you handle that?

[Speaker 1] (37:00 - 39:27)

I'm not very good at handling the external things like money. So basically it hasn't made very much difference to my life, and I haven't really paid much attention to it. Most of my attention is absorbed by teaching or answering questions and so on.

Yes, I live in somewhat more spacious surroundings now than I used to, but that's really all. So that hasn't made very much difference. I'm hardly aware of it.

For a large part of my life, I lived with very little money, and probably people would have said I lived below the poverty line, as they call it, and yet I never felt poor. I always felt I had quite enough, and now I don't feel wealthy any more than I did then. So it's exactly the same feeling.

So it's a very abstract thing, the fact that now there is more wealth in my life on the external dimension. It's only an abstract truth to me. It has not affected me inside at all, and it's only very slightly affected my external life.

I walk around cities and look at shops, and I sometimes like to look at things, but very rarely do I actually feel the impulse to go and buy something. It's enough to look at a beautiful object and then walk on. So I don't know what to buy with it.

There is the possibility at some point that there may be a center, a spiritual center coming into being. So if that happens, then some of the income from the book may flow into that. That is something that I'm not actively planning now, but I have a feeling it may happen.

[Speaker 2] (39:30 - 39:44)

And I also imagine that many people want to have something from you, and maybe they are admiring you or putting you in a place of a guru. And how do you relate to that? Do

you need to protect yourself?

[Speaker 1] (39:44 - 42:37)

Yes. Before, it used to be the way that people, anybody who wanted to see me, would just call me or talk to me on the phone. I would talk to them and say, Can I see you?

Yes, come. And then after the book came out, that became impossible because the phone kept ringing. And so in one sense, when I was only reaching a small number of people, however, there was the satisfaction of having close personal contact with people who came to me.

Now, the close personal contact, because the numbers have grown so much, that has become lost to a large extent. And yet, the teaching is reaching far, far, far more people than it did before. So really, and this is very much the same in any situation in life, every situation has its own limitations.

There were certain limitations to my life on an external level when the teaching was not yet reaching many people. The teaching was very limited in that sense, although it was very satisfying. Now the limitation is that people cannot access me personally very easily.

I have to have several people in between me and the world, simply because on a practical level, it's the only way I can live. I cannot reply to every email or answer every letter. And thousands and thousands of letters come in all the time, and emails.

And I cannot just pick up the phone and answer. It's harder for individual people to reach me. It's difficult, if not impossible.

And that's simply, I need to accept that that is a limitation that's unavoidable. Knowing, however, that the teaching is reaching far more people than ever before. Yes, it's a pity.

I still sometimes have a little group at home in Vancouver of people I've known for a long time. Even before the book came out, they used to come to see me. So occasionally we get together as a little group of 20 people or so in my living room.

And I enjoy that very much. So that's how it is. It's always a question of surrendering to whatever the present moment presents you with and whatever limitations there may be at this moment.

There's no situation that is free of limitation of one kind or another.

[Speaker 2] (42:39 - 42:46)

Do you have an explanation why your teaching applies so much to modern people?

[Speaker 1] (42:47 - 47:24)

Well, the terms used, the words, the terminology that is used in the teaching, the words that are used, which are no more than pointers, not philosophical explanations, they are relatively neutral. They don't carry the weight of centuries and centuries of past as they do in ancient teachings. So they are not culturally conditioned in that sense, relatively neutral.

And so they can reach many people no matter what their background is. People who may have a religious background can be reached if they are open enough. Because I don't deny that there is deep truth in every religion.

This is why I quote in *The Power of Now* from Buddhism and Hinduism and Christian teachings. And even people who have no religious background whatsoever can be reached by the teaching. This is one reason perhaps why it has reached so many people.

And another reason is that *The Power of Now* was written, it came out of that state of consciousness that it points to. So it came out of a state of inner stillness and receptiveness, spontaneously. The writing was a spontaneous act although I incorporated some of the writings that I had done in previous years.

There was an enormous, very strong creative impulse that flew into the writing. It flowed into the writing. So the book contains an energy, this sounds perhaps a little mysterious, but many people have said it, that when people read the book the words go beyond the mere informational value of the words.

This is why one can re-read the book many times and still feel it's fresh and new. And every time you read, and maybe it may just be one or two pages, the reading of it can put you back into the state that I call presence. Because whatever the book speaks about it ultimately points to that inner state of alignment with the present moment.

So people can just pick up the book, read a couple of pages and feel the mental noise slows down or subsides and they become awake again, alert, present in the now and they can sense some peace inside. And so that's what it's all about. So that is at work in the book and it is also at work in the group sessions because in the group sessions nothing is ever prepared.

I don't come with a script. I don't even come with any idea in my head what we are going to do today or talk about today. When I sit down on the chair I have no idea even a few seconds before opening my mouth what's going to come out.

So in that sense you can say it comes really out of the immediacy of the present moment. And so what words come out depends very often on the energy field of the group. And so there is an interaction between the teaching, the teacher and the taught.

There is an ancient Eastern saying that says the teacher and the taught together produce the teaching. And that's how it is. And that's why the teaching has great power because it doesn't come from the accumulated knowledge of the mind but it comes out of the immediacy of the present moment.

It's not prepared. And even on a retreat that lasts for three, four, five days sometimes there is absolutely no pre-planned structure to the retreat. It all grows organically out of the present moment.

[Speaker 2] (47:29 - 48:04)

I have one question. At least one more. You talk about surrendering and you talk about suffering as one path to surrendering to presence.

And you say that some people don't need the suffering. But anyway, surrendering is beyond will and wanting. So what does it take?

And what about grace? I imagine that it takes grace also. Could you comment on that?

[Speaker 1] (48:05 - 52:57)

Yes. You won't surrender, which means, surrender means only accept this moment as it is. But you won't be able to surrender unless you're completely fed up with suffering.

You've had enough suffering. And at some level you recognize that most of your suffering is self-created. It is created out of resistance to what is.

It is created out of an interpretation of something that is. It comes from a thought, from an interpretation, not from the situation. So you realize really that I've had enough suffering and only when you've truly had enough suffering in your life are you able to say, I don't need it anymore.

Suffering is a wonderful teacher. Suffering is most people's only spiritual teacher. And suffering deepens you.

It gradually erodes the mind-made sense of self, the ego. And for some people the point arrives where they realize I have suffered enough. And that, for example, is the case with almost all the people who come to a retreat.

If you ask them, they've all had their share of human suffering. Otherwise they wouldn't be open to the message. They've had their share of human suffering.

And they've reached a point where they are ready to listen to the message that says there is another way to live. There is another way in which you can live that does not create further suffering for yourself. Because to a large extent humans create their own suffering.

And so, when you are ready to hear that message, and that's really the message that is in every religion, that's the message, the central message of Buddhism is the end of suffering. And even the central message of the teaching of Jesus is finding the pearl of great price, finding the kingdom of heaven that is within you, here and now, as Jesus says. And that, of course, is the end of living in a state of suffering.

So, one could say that you need suffering for you to realize, for you to come to a point of realization that you do not need to suffer anymore. There's a paradox here. If I had not suffered, I would not, this teaching would not exist.

So you could say it has come partly as a result of intense suffering. Because as a human being I would not have evolved spiritually if I had not suffered. So suffering was my main teacher, and suffering is for many people their main teacher.

But then some people when they are ready, they come into contact with a spiritual teaching or teacher. And that can speed up the process of realization that you don't need to suffer anymore. You're ready to hear that.

So that was, the Buddha talked about nothing else already 2,600 years ago, that there can be an end to self-inflicted suffering. And when you don't inflict suffering on yourself anymore, and remember it's the thoughts, your thoughts make you suffer more than anything else. It's not usually the situation, it's your interpretation of the situation, of how dreadful it all is.

And so when you see that, then you see there is another way to live in which I no longer mentally argue with what is. And that's the end of self-inflicted suffering. And if I no longer inflict suffering on myself, I no longer inflict suffering on others because the two go together.

[Speaker 2] (52:57 - 53:09)

But what will make me or somebody else take that step? Is it just acceptance?

[Speaker 1] (53:10 - 54:46)

It's acceptance, but acceptance won't come unless you've reached this inner point of readiness. And this is why I never try to convince anybody that what I'm saying is true or they should practice something. I never say you should do this or try to convince somebody who doesn't want to believe it.

That is pointless. Only if you are ready internally for it. And so one way of putting it is to say if you have suffered enough, then you're ready.

Then you're open to it and you immediately see the truth of it. You immediately see that you ultimately make yourself suffer. It's not the situation, it's the mental interpretation of

the situation, which in most cases is a form of resistance.

And that creates the suffering. And so you need to, when you hear these words, if you don't immediately recognize the truth, if there's an inner arguing, that's fine. There's no should here.

There's no... The teaching never says this is how you should live. It's only if you can hear the truth of it, it will make sense to you and then it can help you.

So it can only help those who have an inner readiness. But there are many, many people alive now in whom the readiness is there. They are able to hear it, to truly hear it and immediately recognize, yes, this is true.

Convincing never works.

[Speaker 2] (54:48 - 54:53)

But being in the present, I mean, is it a possibility for everybody?

[Speaker 1] (54:55 - 55:01)

Being in the present moment is a possibility for those who are ready for it. Not yet for everybody.

[Speaker 2] (55:02 - 55:10)

What if we were all living in presence? I mean, what would happen? Would we have electricity?

Would it work?

[Speaker 1] (55:10 - 56:58)

One thing is certain that the world would look very different from the way it is now. We can't possibly imagine how the human world would look if everybody lived in a different state of consciousness, in a state that is predominantly a state of inner peace. What kind of civilization would we create out of a state of inner peace?

It's impossible to predict. All we can say is that probably it would not be as complex as it is now. People would not be running around continuously engaged in largely pointless activities.

It would probably not be such a noisy civilization as it is now, because no civilization has ever been as noisy as this one, and that's simply because whatever human beings create externally is a reflection of their inner state. So we are polluting the planet simply because our inner selves are being polluted by an enormous amount of negativity, of continuous resistance. So the outer is always a reflection of the inner.

So if the inner is predominantly a state of inner peace, we create a peaceful world on the outside. What exact form that would take, we don't know. We'd have to see what it is.

It would very probably be a much more simple world, more harmonious and beautiful. Nature is beautiful already, but I'm speaking of the human-made world.

[Speaker 2] (57:02 - 57:07)

Is it possible, in a few words, to say what is the essence of your teaching? Is that possible?

[Speaker 1] (57:09 - 1:00:02)

Well, the essence is very simple, and the essence could probably be taught, and perhaps one day will be taught to very young children at school. And children are very close to it anyway. The essence is, I could put it in the most simple terms, because the most simple is often the most powerful.

The essence is to make the present moment into your friend, not your enemy. To always ask yourself, what is my relationship with the present moment? At this moment, of course.

What is my inner relationship with the present moment? Is the present moment, am I friendly towards the present moment, or am I hostile towards the present moment? Is the present moment my enemy?

And then that would be enough to bring about a change, because when you realize that you are making the present moment into your enemy, and you also know that that's all you ever have in life, then you realize it is a mad way to live, to treat this moment as if it were an obstacle to where you want to get to. And you never get there, because it's always now. Then your relationship towards the present moment changes.

It changes, and your relationship becomes one of yes rather than no to what is. It does not mean that you become passive, or that you will never do anything again. It simply means that the foundation for any action you take is the state of yes to what is.

And if there's a state, the inner state of yes to what is, that is the state of inner peace. And inner peace is much more powerful as a foundation for right action than the state of resistance and negativity. So that is the essence.

Find that state of inner alignment with the present moment, which comes with a yes, and then see what happens. See how your world changes as you no longer resist the is-ness of this moment.

[Speaker 2] (1:00:05 - 1:00:23)

Thank you. You concluded the teaching about your role as a teacher, and you said something about you have nothing to teach to nobody, something like that. Could you just state that, how you see your role as a teacher?

[Speaker 1] (1:00:25 - 1:03:05)

In conventional terms, teaching means that I give you information that you didn't know. I add something to you. So a student absorbs new information, accumulates new information.

But in spiritual teaching, the teacher just points to the truth that is already in every human being, and also points to the way in which that truth that is already in every human being is covered up. And anybody who is ready can immediately recognize the truth of the teaching as if they had already known it, because on some level they already knew it. And that's why I say I don't really have anything to teach in the sense of adding information to you.

There's nothing that you need to add in order to find yourself and be yourself. You can add on an external level. It's nice to learn new things.

It's nice to explore this or that. And yet on an essential level, the essential level is the level of who you are, your innermost sense of self. It's the level of being.

On the most essential level, no matter where you are at in your life, what your life situation is, on the most essential level nothing needs to be added to who you are. So the spiritual teaching is not an amour. It's not an addition.

It's simply a pointing towards that which is already there. And those who are ready then suddenly recognize the truth of it. Recognize means they already knew it.

It's almost like remembering. Ah, yes. And then there's no question about it.

Convincing is not necessary. It's immediate realization. Then spiritual teaching works as it should.

So that's how it operates. And that's the difference between a conventional teaching and spiritual teaching. In some sense one could say the spiritual teaching is almost the opposite of the conventional teaching.

If anything, it takes something away from you. It takes away that which covered up who you are. But it is not taken away by the teacher.

It's taken away by yourself when you see it and become conscious of it.

[Speaker 2] (1:03:05 - 1:03:12)

That's very clear. Yes. Thank you very much.

Thank you. Thank you for your time.